

**Consider Adopting the *Arizona Trails 2010: A Statewide Motorized and Non-motorized Trails Plan***

**Background**

Per ARS § 41-511.22 and ARS § 41-511.04 (20), Arizona State Parks is mandated to complete a statewide off-highway vehicle (OHV) plan every five years. Since 2000, these plans have been combined into a single document. Staff has drafted the plan and completed the public involvement process for the *Arizona Trails 2010: A Statewide Motorized and Non-motorized Trails Plan*. The Plan identifies the needs, attitudes and preferences of Arizona's recreational trail users, both motorized and non-motorized. This Plan includes recommendations and action strategies to protect and enhance trails throughout the state including those in local city, county and state parks, as well as those on National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands. The Plan also identifies funding priorities.

State Parks' staff partnered with Arizona State University to conduct a series of telephone and online surveys. Staff also held sixteen regional public and land manager workshops. These public involvement efforts reached more than 5,500 Arizonans to find out about what types of motorized or non-motorized trails they use, how often they use trails, what they like or don't like about trails, and what trail and OHV managers should focus their time and dollars on to make the trail experience better.

**Current Status**

Staff compiled the results of the *Arizona Statewide Trail Users Surveys*, the responses from the regional workshops, and additional research into a draft plan, which was available for public comment from April 4 through June 30, 2009. Staff submitted this draft plan to the Arizona State Committee on Trails (ASCOT) and Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Group (OHVAG) at their joint meeting on May 15, 2009. After incorporating the committees' and public comments, the final plan was approved by OHVAG on August 7, 2009 and AORCC on August 13, 2009 (ASCOT does not meet until October).

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends the Board adopt the *Arizona Trails 2010: A Statewide Motorized and Non-motorized Trails Plan* (see [www.azstateparks.com/publications/index.html#Trails\\_2010](http://www.azstateparks.com/publications/index.html#Trails_2010)).

**Recommended Board Action**

I move to adopt the *Arizona Trails 2010: A Statewide Motorized and Non-motorized Trails Plan*.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

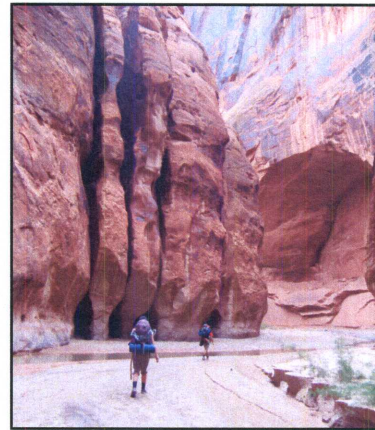
### Arizona Trails 2010

Trails have been an integral part of human civilization, from the earliest times following game trails on hunts, traveling between settlements to trade goods, to blazing new trails while exploring uncharted territories. Today we still use trails for those, and many other activities.

They are our conduits to work, to shop, to school. We use trails to exercise our bodies and quiet our minds. Trails lead us through places of inspiration and challenge. They are avenues to quality family time or friendly social interactions. They are elemental to our daily lives.

Simply put, trails improve our quality of life.

The demand for recreational trails in Arizona, both motorized and non-motorized, is high. Sixty-nine percent of Arizonans are trail users, twice the national average. Considerable change has occurred on Arizona's recreational trails and off-highway vehicle (OHV) routes and areas in the last five years including a 16% state population increase, and a 20% increase in numbers of recreational trail and OHV users.



In addition there has been a substantial increase in off-highway vehicle ownership—with Arizonans purchasing an average of 30,000 new all-terrain vehicles (ATV) and motorcycles annually (numbers do not include sales of the new utility terrain or side by side vehicles).

There have been drastic cuts to the budgets of agencies that manage the lands and trail resources, including reductions in the staff that plan, build or maintain the trails, making it difficult to keep up with the public's demand for trails and routes.

#### The Plan and Public Participation

This planning document details the results of extensive surveys of Arizonans' thoughts, preferences and priorities regarding trails and OHV routes. Throughout the year 2008, staff at Arizona State Parks and faculty at Arizona State University partnered to solicit information from more than 5,500 Arizonans about what types of motorized or non-motorized trails they use, how often they use trails, what they like or don't like about trails, and what trail managers should focus their time and dollars on to make the trail experience better. The questions were asked via telephone, online (Internet), mail, at public meetings and open forums, and in the field at trailheads. The survey and workshop results can be found throughout this document and in the appendices. They form the foundation for the priority recommendations and actions that are at the heart of the Plan.



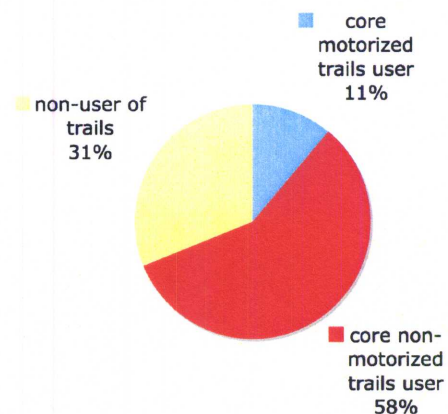
This Plan, titled *Arizona Trails 2010: State Motorized and Non-motorized Recreational Trails Plan*, includes both motorized and non-motorized trail information, public involvement results and recommendations for future actions regarding trails in Arizona. This Plan, which supercedes the *Arizona Trails 2005 Plan*, was prepared by Arizona State Parks as required by state legislation (off-highway vehicle plan A.R.S. § 41-511.04 (20), and trails plan § 41-511.22).

The purpose of this Plan is to provide information and recommendations to guide Arizona State Parks and other agencies in Arizona in their management of motorized routes and non-motorized trail resources, and specifically to guide the distribution and expenditure of the Arizona Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Fund (A.R.S. § 28-1176), trails component of the Arizona Heritage Fund (A.R.S. § 41-503) and the Federal Recreational Trails Program (23 U.S.C. 206). For the purposes of this Plan, a “trail” is broadly defined as “a corridor on land or through water that provides recreational, aesthetic or educational opportunities to motorized and non-motorized users of all ages and abilities”.

The Plan is written primarily for recreation planners and land managers. In its component parts, it provides background on trail users, on current trends and issues affecting recreational OHV and non-motorized trail opportunities, and on trail and OHV funding and management priorities. The Plan is designed as an information resource as well as a planning tool to guide agencies for the next five years.

### Summary of Survey Findings

- The telephone survey results show that 68.6% of Arizonans have used a trail for recreation during their time in Arizona; 31.4% of residents do not use trails for recreational purposes.
- Statewide, 63.7% of respondents indicated that they had engaged in non-motorized activities on trails at some point during their time in Arizona, and 58% of trail users indicated that the *majority* of their trail use is non-motorized.
- Statewide, 21.5% of respondents indicated that they had engaged in motorized activities on trails at some point during their time in Arizona, and 10.7% of trail users said that motorized use accounted for the *majority* of their trail use.
- The percentage of non-motorized trail users ranged from a high of 68.3% in Coconino County to a low of 34.6% in Yuma, La Paz, and Mohave Counties. The percentage of motorized trail users ranged from a high of 22.2% in Yuma, La Paz, and Mohave Counties to a low of 7.9% in Pima County.
- Overall, 87% of respondents are either very satisfied or satisfied with non-motorized trails in Arizona, and 65% are either very satisfied or satisfied with motorized trails.
- The most common non-motorized trail activities for non-motorized trail users are: trail hiking, backpacking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.



- The most common motorized pursuits for motorized users are: all-terrain vehicle driving, four wheel driving or other high clearance vehicle driving, and motorized biking/dirt biking.
- Overall, the top three areas of environmental concern for *all trail users* are litter or trash dumping, decreased wildlife sightings, and erosion of trails. The top three concerns for *motorized users* are litter or trash dumping, damage to vegetation, and decreased wildlife sightings. The top three environmental concerns for *non-motorized users* are litter or trash dumping, erosion of trails, and decreased wildlife sightings.
- Overall, the top concerns about social conditions for *all trail users* are vandalism, urban development limiting trail access or use, and lack of trail ethics by other users. The top three concerns about social conditions for *motorized users* are urban development limiting trail access or use, vandalism, and closure of trails. The top three concerns about social conditions for *non-motorized users* are vandalism, urban development limiting trail access or use, and lack of trail ethics by other users.
- The top three trail planning and management priorities for *motorized users* are acquiring land for trails and trail access, keeping existing trails in good condition, and mitigating damage to environment surrounding trails. The top three issues for *non-motorized users* are keeping existing trails in good condition, mitigating damage to environment surrounding trails, and enforcing existing rules and regulations in trail areas.
- When asked, given limited funding, which one management priority is the most important, motorized trail users indicated acquiring land for trails and access (20%) was most important, whereas non-motorized users replied keeping existing trails in good condition (32%).
- Non-motorized users are more likely to respond that trails should be designated for multiple activities but with motorized and non-motorized users separated, or trails should be designated for a single activity.
- Both motorized and non-motorized users tend to use trails in groups of 1-5 people, although motorized users were more likely to recreate in groups of 5 or more.
- Nearly half of motorized users (44.4%) believe that access to off-highway vehicle roads and trails has declined in the last five years. In contrast just 11% of both groups believe that access to non-motorized trails has declined.
- On non-motorized trails, both groups tend to prefer social environments with very few or some other people around but not dense social settings with lots of other people present.
- The three most important desired OHV trail features for motorized users are loop trails, trails that offer challenge and technical driving opportunity, and cross-country travel areas (where riding anywhere is permitted).
- The results indicate that, by and large, respondents do not experience recreation conflict with other trail users, although there are some areas of potential concern. For instance, 13.7% of non-motorized users reported experiencing conflict with mountain bikers somewhat or very often. Also, 33.4% of motorized trail users experienced conflict with all terrain vehicle or quad riders somewhat or very often.
- More than 50% of motorized users and more than 40% of non-motorized users are willing to volunteer their time to build or maintain trails in Arizona. To encourage volunteerism, the most important consideration is providing information about when and where to show up.



## Priority Recommendations

The *Arizona Trails 2010* recommendations for motorized and non-motorized trail use serve as an overall direction for Arizona State Parks, land managers, and trail and OHV users in their efforts to improve the State of Arizona's trail opportunities. These recommendations are also used by all participating agencies to guide distribution of funds administered by Arizona State Parks from the Trail Heritage Fund, OHV Recreation Fund and the Federal Recreational Trails Program until the next five-year plan is published.

The following priority recommendations were developed from the *Arizona Trails 2010* public involvement process. Recommendations within each level are in no particular order. Managers and recreational trail users are encouraged to concentrate their planning and management efforts on the recommended actions.

### Motorized Trail Recommendations

<b>First Level Priority</b> <b>Motorized Trail Recommendations</b>	
Protect Access to Trails/Acquire Land for Public Access	
Maintain and Renovate Existing Trails and Routes	
Mitigate and Restore Damage to Areas Surrounding Trails, Routes and Areas	
Establish and Designate Motorized Trails, Routes and Areas	
<b>Second Level Priority</b> <b>Motorized Trail Recommendations</b>	
Increase On-the-Ground Management Presence and Law Enforcement	
Provide and Install Trail/Route Signs	
Provide Maps and Trail/Route Information	
Provide Educational Programs	
<b>Third Level Priority</b> <b>Motorized Trail Recommendations</b>	
Develop Support Facilities	
Promote Coordinated Volunteerism	
Promote Comprehensive Planning and Interagency Coordination	

**Non-motorized Trail Recommendations**

<b>First Level Priority</b> <b>Non-Motorized Trail Recommendations</b>	
Maintain Existing Trails, Keep Trails in Good Condition	
Protect Access to Trails/Acquire Land for Public Access	
<b>Second Level Priority</b> <b>Non-Motorized Trail Recommendations</b>	
Mitigate and Restore Damage to Areas Surrounding Trails	
Enforce Existing Rules and Regulations	
Provide and Install Trail Signs	
Develop Support Facilities	
Construct New Trails	
Promote Coordinated Volunteerism	
<b>Third Level</b> <b>Non-Motorized Trail Recommendations</b>	
Provide Educational Programs	
Provide Maps and Trail Information	
Promote Regional Planning and Interagency Coordination	



### Trail and Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Issues

The findings of the *Trails 2010: A Study of Arizona's Motorized and Non-motorized Trail Users* survey report show the importance of recreational trails and routes to Arizona residents. There are several current issues in Arizona that are affecting both the resources available for trails and off-highway vehicle routes and the user demands for these recreation opportunities. These issues are discussed further in the *Arizona Trails 2010 Plan*.

<b>A Snapshot of Trail and OHV Issues in Arizona</b>
<p><b>Arizona's population continues to increase at record levels</b> 6.6 million people in 2008</p>
<p><b>The number of trail and OHV users is increasing</b> 69% of adult Arizonans are trail users—that's 3.2 million people not including children or visitors</p>
<p><b>Also increasing are the types of recreational trail activities</b> (canyoneering; side by sides; rock crawling; extreme sports)</p>
<p><b>There are more people wanting to use trails close to home</b> as part of their regular exercise routine and to get away from everyday pressures (walking; running; biking; bird watching; walking the dog)</p>
<p><b>There is an increasing number of people with mobility issues</b> wanting to access and explore Arizona's trails and backcountry (people with disabilities; people with small children; senior citizens; baby boomers)</p>
<p><b>Volunteers are offering their assistance</b> to land managers to build and maintain trails and OHV areas</p>
<p><b>Trails must compete for use of Arizona's land base</b> (one type of trail use vs another; trail use vs other recreation activities; grazing, mining, logging, energy production; development for homes and businesses; protection of natural and cultural resources)</p>
<p><b>Trail closures and a loss of access to trails</b> are decreasing recreational opportunities (due to environmental impacts; vandalism; urban development; air quality/dust)</p>
<p><b>Safety and law enforcement issues</b> associated with illegal human and drug smuggling across the U.S.-Mexico border are impacting recreational trail use and the environment in southern Arizona</p>
<p><b>Agency budget reductions and fund sweeps reduce money and staff available</b> to plan, build and maintain trails and OHV routes, and to coordinate volunteer efforts</p>
<p><i>Keep reading, there's more throughout the plan!</i></p>